



Source 5

Grigori Tokaty, a former Russian soldier speaking in 1972, recalls Stalin's brutal policies in the 1930s

(Imperial War Museum, 2810 reel 1)

Questions

1. What is Tokaty's view about the collectivisation and liquidation of the Kulaks?
2. According to Tokaty, what damage did these policies do to the USSR?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages for a historian of using this source as evidence?



HEROES & VILLAINS

Stalin & industrialisation > How?

Source 5

You see you may remember that from about 1929 to about 1933, the Soviet Union carried out two extremely interesting and tragic campaigns. One was the so-called liquidation of the Kulaks (well-off peasants). Now by the way, liquidation meant liquidation - was a real true physical liquidation. Parallel to this and on the basis of this liquidation a forced collectivisation was carried out.

Now, I was a witness and a contemporary of both campaigns and I now say that they created a tragic situation - famine, branches of the economy paralysed and since the armed forces were really fed from agriculture (soldiers used to come from mainly peasantry) of course the moral and psychological effect of these tragedies demoralised in a degree the armed forces.

That is one thing. Secondly you will recall that in 1933-34 there were so-called party purges. The party purges aimed at one thing - to eliminate those who had some kind of critical mind, independent mind, who questioned the wisdom of this collectivisation and liquidation of Kulaks. Now these purges freed the party and I must add here the party was and still is the only party, it was the ruling party. It was the party who ran the state. Now that party was freed of its most brilliant personnel members, the thinking part. That too affected the state of affairs. You will see my conclusion in a second. Then you will recall that on December 1 1934, a member of Politburo, Kirov, was assassinated. From then onwards, until about the end of 1939, the USSR was a country, or the country of notorious show trials and extremely unusual but dreadfully tragic - er - I don't really know, people in the West call it purges, but it's worse than purges, it was a national tragedy, its purpose being to eliminate not only from the party but from the whole state all those who had some kind of critical mind. So the country was freed so to speak of its creative leaders at all levels in all branches of the economy.